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The Current Relocation Practice in Chinese Historic Districts from the Perspective of Residents' Willingness to Relocate: A Case Study of Baitasi Historic District, Beijing

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The Current Relocation Practice in Chinese Historic Districts from the Perspective of Residents' Willingness to Relocate: A Case Study of Baitasi Historic District, Beijing

Abstract

After years of trials, China has been shifting the model of historic district regeneration from massive destruction and construction to incremental and small-scale preservation, including changing the complete and involuntary relocation of original residents to negotiable and partial relocation. During the process, residents' willingness to relocate is important for the decision-makers to consider who is likely to move and who is likely to stay. To investigate the residents' willingness to relocate for the purpose of improving the relocation and regeneration practice in Chinese historic districts, this research uses Baitasi Historic District in Beijing as an example and focuses on those who are unwilling to relocate. By literature research and semi-structured interviews, this research identifies five factors that cause some residents unwilling to relocate: unsatisfactory government compensation; good accessibility to facilities and services in and around the neighborhood; complicated property ownership; emotional attachment to the neighborhood; and the residents' age. Moreover, the research distinguishes two types of residents that are unwilling to relocate. The first type is defined as conditional stayers who will be willing to relocate if the government raises the amount of compensation and offers better new houses. The other type is defined as determined stayers who are determined to stay in the neighborhood despite the government policy. Their different demands to housing and anticipation of the historic district regeneration reflect various problems within the relocation policy. Consequently, the research offers four policy recommendations: enhance community engagement, broaden financing sources, provide more relocation options, and explore applicable rehabilitation plan.

Keywords

relocation policy, voluntary relocation, willingness to relocate, historic district, China

Disciplines

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THE CURRENT RELOCATION PRACTICE IN CHINESE HISTORIC DISTRICTS
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESIDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO RELOCATE:
A CASE STUDY OF BAITASI HISTORIC DISTRICT, BEIJING

Ran Wei

A THESIS

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1. Introduction

Issues of historic preservation come to the fore in Chinese cities that have witnessed a dramatic physical and social change in the past four decades. Before and during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, the deliberate “anti-traditionalism” destroyed many historic structures. Compared to the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, China’s hectic commercial development, especially real estate development, destroyed more urban heritage since the country’s economic reform in 1978. In Beijing, for example, approximately 600 traditional *hutongs* (alleys of courtyard houses) were bulldozed each year from the late 1970s through 1990s, displacing 500,000 residents, and reducing the total number of alleys from 3,200 in the 1950s to around 600 today.¹

Since the 1980s, the national government started to realize the cultural significance of urban heritage and the urgency of preserving urban heritage. In 1982, as a response to the massive destruction of urban heritage, the national government issued the *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics* which marks the start of large-scale historic preservation in China.² Soon after, the national government established a three-level preservation system, including individual buildings, historic districts, and

1 Chuanglin Fang and Danlin Yu, *China’s New Urbanization, Development Paths, Blueprints and Patterns* (Berlin: Springer, 2016).

2 See National Cultural Heritage Administration, *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics (2017 Amendment)*, http://www.sach.gov.cn/art/2017/11/28/art_1034_121351.html (In Chinese).

historic and cultural cities.³ Among the three levels, historic districts function as a container, not just for historic buildings, but also for intangible heritage and human activities and emotions. Consequently, historic districts are becoming an increasingly important component of the preservation theory and practice in China. Moreover, since the 1990s, the local government has realized that revitalizing historic districts can stimulate local economic growth. The outcome of revitalizing historic districts can then help local government officials be promoted in their career path.⁴ The regeneration of historic districts thus has become increasingly prevalent in many Chinese cities. However, inappropriate regeneration approaches have caused many issues for the physical environment as well as residents and small businesses in the historic districts, which requires more investigations and research to improve the current regeneration methods and policies.

In China, the regeneration of historic districts sometimes follows the same template which usually starts from relocating residents that have lived in the historic districts for generations. In the Chinese context, the relocation process is always government-led and involved with a big population, which makes the relocation crucial to the entire regeneration project. Before the 2010s, the relocation was involuntary. Most, if not all, of

3 Jiangfang Wang, "Conservation Policies and Planning of City Historic Sites," *City Planning Review* 28, no.10 (2004): 68-73 (In Chinese).

4 Yisan Ruan, "The Study on Some Issues Related to the Conservation and Planning for the Historic Streets and Areas in China," *City Planning Review* 25, no.10 (2001): 25-32 (In Chinese).

the residents were relocated from the historic districts to apartment buildings assigned by the local government.⁵ After the 2010s, the relocation has started to become a negotiable process where residents can choose to stay in the historic districts or to move to apartment buildings outside the historic districts.⁶ As a result, residents' willingness to relocate has become one of the considerations for the local government when it comes to deciding who to move. This thesis, therefore, focuses on residents' willingness to relocate in Chinese historic districts during the current regeneration projects. This research has two purposes: to start the relatively new research topic in the field of historic district regeneration in China and to provide a new perspective for investigating and improving the current regeneration policy.

Since the current voluntary relocation in historic districts is a relatively new practice, residents' willingness to relocate has not been fully studied. Previous studies on residents' willingness to relocate in China are mainly focused on intraurban relocation due to urban development, and villagers' relocation in rural areas due to the appropriateness of agricultural land or ecological concerns in environmentally vulnerable areas.⁷ In order to

5 Yisan Ruan and Xiaowei Gu, "An Analysis about the Practical Patterns to Convene the Historic Districts in China," *Tongji University Journal Social Science Section* 15, no.5 (2004): 1-6 (In Chinese).

6 Dekui Kong, "Connection and Co-existing: Research on the Design of Micro Alley in Baitasi Area, Beijing" (Master's thesis, Nanjing University of the Arts, 2017): 29 (In Chinese).

7 See studies by Wu, 2003; Wu, 2004; Day and Cervero, 2010; Fang, 2006; Shi, 2018. Wang and Shi, 2018.

further develop the new policy of voluntary relocation in historic districts and improve the historic district regeneration, more studies on this topic are needed.

More importantly, there are a number of questions related to the voluntary relocation remaining unanswered. How much freedom do the residents have? What do the residents usually choose and why? Are they satisfied with the policy and the implementation process? Why or why not? Meanwhile, the relocation process not only includes spatially moving residents from the historic districts to other places, but includes stipulating the policy and negotiating with the residents prior to implementing the policy, and rehabilitating and reusing historic buildings after residents have moved out. In the early stage of the relocation, what should the policy look like? How should the government communicate with the residents? In the later stage of the relocation, how should the government rehabilitate and reuse the historic buildings? The answers to those questions are valuable for the local government to discover the weaknesses in the policy and to improve the policy, which is beneficial to the residents as well as the historic districts. To answer those questions, examining residents' willingness to relocate can be the starting point.

To conduct the research, this thesis looks at one historic district, Baitasi Historic District (*Baitasi*: the White Pagoda Temple) located in the Old City of Beijing, as the case study area. Baitasi Historic District is a typical *hutong* area in Beijing with prominent tangible and intangible heritage and representative demographics. A regeneration project starting from voluntary relocation, Baitasi Remade, is ongoing in the historic district. The

implementation and impacts of the regeneration project have not been intensively studied. All of the above makes Baitasi Historic District a good example for this research. Meanwhile, the research result will be generic and be able to speak to a broader case in spite of the few specificities in the regeneration project and the relocation policy in Baitasi Historic District.

Considering the lack of research on this topic, the research only focuses on residents who are unwilling to relocate as a start and uses qualitative methods including literature research and semi-structured interviews to study the factors that make the residents unwilling to relocate. The core question this research is intended to answer is: what are the major factors that cause some residents in Baitasi Historic District unwilling to relocate? The hypothetical answer is that the residents are unsatisfied with the current relocation policy. At the same time, the residents may have other personal considerations such as accessibility to hospitals and schools, and attachment to the neighborhood. In order to answer the core question and to test the hypotheses, the following specific questions are required to be studied: (1) what is the current relocation policy in Baitasi Historic District? (2) What do those unwilling to relocate in Baitasi Historic District have in common? (3) Are the residents who are unwilling to relocate satisfied with the relocation policy? Why or why not? (4) What are the personal demands and/or considerations of those unwilling to relocate that keep them staying in Baitasi Historic District?

To analyze what makes some residents in Baitasi Historic District unwilling to relocate,

this thesis will explore four main topics:

First, as a background for this research, how the regeneration model in Chinese historic districts has been changed from a large-scale and arbitrary demolition and reconstruction to an incremental and small-scale regeneration, and previous studies on residents' relocation in western countries and in China will be reviewed.

Second, after introducing the case study area, the current regeneration project in the case study area, the methodology of the research, and the interview results will be presented. Based on the interview, this research summarizes five factors that cause some residents in Baitasi Historic District unwilling to relocate: (1) unsatisfactory government compensation, (2) good accessibility to various facilities and services including hospitals, schools, pharmacies, and grocery stores in and around Baitasi Historic District, (3) complicated property ownership of the houses in Baitasi Historic District, (4) emotional attachment to the physical space and the neighbors, and (5) the residents' age. In comparison, compensation is on macro-level; accessibility, attachment, and age are on micro-level; and property ownership is between macro- and micro-level. Age and attachment are internal factors; compensation and accessibility are external factors; and property ownership can be either internal or external. Some of the factors are affected by others. The comparison and analysis provide a better understanding of the relationship between the five factors for the purpose of locating and solving the issues generated by the relocation policy.

Third, on the basis of the interview results, this thesis will address two types of

residents unwilling to relocate that this research finds distinctive. From their perspectives respectively, the discussion will also include the issues of the current historic district regeneration and relocation policy. One category of the residents that are unwilling to relocate is defined as “conditional stayers”, referring to those that stay in the historic district for now due to the unsatisfactory relocation policy. In the case of government increasing the monetary compensation and assigning new houses with better condition and accessibility to facilities and services, they will choose to relocate instead. The other category of the residents that are unwilling to relocate is defined as “determined stayers”, referring to those determined to stay in Baitasi Historic District regardless of the government policy in terms of the monetary compensation, new housing options, and the regeneration of the historic district. The two types of stayers have different demands on housing, and the determined stayers have their visions for the historic district regeneration which is influential to their daily life. Their comments on current relocation policy thus help to target different problems existing in current historic district regeneration and relocation policy.

Fourth, based on the analysis of the factors that make residents unwilling to relocate and the discussion of the two types of stayers, four policy recommendations will be presented: enhance community engagement, broaden financing channels, provide more relocation options, and explore applicable rehabilitation plan.

As a conclusion, this thesis will reiterate the five factors that cause some residents

unwilling to relocate in Baitasi Historic District, the two types of stayers, the existing issues of the current relocation policy, and the policy recommendations. The insufficiency of this research and future research directions on this topic will be presented as well.

1.1 Regeneration Model and Relocation Practice in Chinese Historic Districts

A number of regeneration projects in historic districts of different Chinese cities tend to follow a common template. Before a project begins, local government forms a new company and invests in the company which will execute the project in the future. Although the company typically has a certain percentage of private investment, the government is still the biggest investor and thus dominates the company and the regeneration project. The project usually starts from relocating the historic districts' residents to apartment buildings assigned by the government. After the relocation, the company introduces new businesses, mostly cultural tourism businesses and cultural industries, to the historic districts.

From the 1990s to approximately 2004, the old regeneration model is known as complete relocation of residents and large-scale demolition and reconstruction of the historic districts. Historic districts in China are usually residential areas. The result of such regeneration practice turns those residential historic districts into commercial districts or tourist attractions completely. Examples of such historic districts include the Ancient City of Lijiang in Yunan Province and Qianmen in Beijing.⁸ For relocation specifically, the

8 Yisan Ruan and Xiaowei Gu, "An Analysis about the Practical Patterns to Convene the Historic Districts in China," *Tongji University Journal Social Science Section* 15, no.5 (2004): 1-6. Also based on author's work experience at Tsinghua Tongheng Planning and Design Institute in Beijing and Quanzhou, China in

example is that from 2003 to 2008, Kuanzhaixiangzi, a historic district in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, relocated more than 90% of the residents.⁹ In some cases, some residents were able to relocate back from apartment buildings to the historic districts after the buildings were rehabilitated, yet the percentage was usually lower than 30%.¹⁰

In recent years, scholars have pointed out that this kind of regeneration practice is problematic, as it has led to many conflictual outcomes such as gentrification of those historic districts. The breaking up of the existing social networks and the loss of authenticity of heritage are believed to hinder the heritage preservation efforts.¹¹ Therefore, after 2004, although some of the regeneration projects are still executed by the companies formed by local government, the regeneration model has been changed into a building-by-building, slow and small-scale process. The relocation has also been changed from complete and involuntary relocation to partly and negotiable relocation. For instance, in Yangmeizhu Xiejie, part of the Dashilar Historic District in Beijing, one third of the residents were relocated on their own willingness in the 2010s.¹² It is worth noting that complete and involuntary relocation still exists in small- and mid-sized cities such as

the summer of 2016 and 2018.

9 Wen Duan, and Jie Zhang, "Property Ownership Issues in the Preservation and Regeneration of Historic Districts," *China Cultural Heritage Scientific Research*, no.4 (2017): 16-17 (In Chinese).

10 Junhua Lv, "Beijing's Old and Dilapidated Housing Renewal," *Cities* 14, no.2 (1997): 62.

11 Song Zhang and Ming Zhao, "Gentrification during Historic Preservation Process and the Discussion of Mitigation Methods," *China Ancient City* 4, no.7 (2010): 4-10.

12 Wen Duan, and Jie Zhang, "Property Ownership Issues in the Preservation and Regeneration of Historic Districts," *China Cultural Heritage Scientific Research*, no.4 (2017): 17 (In Chinese).

Quanzhou, Fujian Province and Anyang, Henan Province. It is only in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai that the model shift is occurring.¹³

In the old model, the heritage is usually viewed as an asset of which the economic value outweighs other values. The regeneration is mainly for consumers and tourists that can bring more economic gains for the local government. In the new model, the connection between the heritage and its daily users such as residents and small business owners are more recognized. The goal of the regeneration is no longer profits only, but to improve the built environment while keeping the character defining features of the heritage.

Promising as it is, the voluntary and negotiable relocation in the new model is still questionable. First, the subsidy that the government provides to the relocated families sometimes considers the cost of new housing only while overlooking or underestimating the cost of furnishing. Given the high living expenditure in major cities, the gap can be a burden to the relocated lower-income families. Meanwhile, as some scholars have pointed out, relocation may cause an increase in commuting cost. Whether the subsidy should reimburse part of the commuting cost remains controversial.¹⁴ Second, the number of

13 In 2016, Wudianshi Historic District in Quanzhou, Fujian Province relocated all the residents and turned the historic district into a tourist attraction. The author had the summer internship in Wudianshi Historic District in 2018. In 2010s, the municipal government of Anyang, author's hometown, relocated more than 70% of the residents and small business owners in the old city area and redeveloped the area as a commercial district with reconstructed replicas of traditional Chinese buildings.

14 Jennifer Day, and Robert Cervero, "Effects of Residential Relocation on Household and Commuting Expenditures in Shanghai, China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34, no.4 (2010): 765.

relocated families is still large even if it is partly relocation nowadays, which exerts a big economic burden to local government since the relocation is government-sponsored. As a result, the current relocation process is slow-moving.

In fact, in Chinese historic districts, relocation is believed to be necessary for the residents' well-being. Because of the high population density, poor quality of housing, and the residents' low income, the living condition in many historic districts is poor. For example, in the *hutong* areas in Beijing, there are no private bathrooms.¹⁵ According to the survey conducted by the Government of Beijing Municipality, in the thirty historic districts of the city, there are more than 50% of buildings in poor or poor to fair condition.¹⁶ Therefore, this research is not against relocation. From the perspective of historic preservation, on the other hand, residents are an important component of the urban heritage. Keeping residents in historic districts is essential to retain the cultural significance and heritage value of the historic districts, which has been emphasized by a number of international documents such as the *Nairobi Recommendation*, *Washington Charter*, and *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*.¹⁷ Thus the key questions that the local

15 Mingde Zhu, ed., *Investigation on Urban Corners in Beijing* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005) (In Chinese).

16 Manliang Liu, "Research on the Small-Scale Gradual and Organic Renewal Mode for Historical Residential Area in Old Beijing" (Master's thesis, Tsinghua University, 2006), 4 (In Chinese).

17 UNESCO, "Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas," accessed on February 5, 2019, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114038.page=136>. ICOMOS, "Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas," accessed on February 5, 2019, <https://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/focus/179-articles/en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/159-charter-for-the-conservation-of-historic-towns-and-urban-areas>. UNESCO,

government needs to consider are how many people to relocate, who to relocate, what to do with the historic buildings, and how to improve the stayers' as well as the movers' living condition.

1.2 Previous Studies on Residents' Relocation

In western countries, there exist involuntary relocation and voluntary relocation. The former is also addressed as "forced relocation", the definition of which is "the involuntary approach as one in which families are forcibly moved out of their previous homes" according to Goetz¹⁸. While the latter is sometimes addressed as "residential mobility" which primarily tries to explain the residents' own moving behavior.

1.2.1 Forced Relocation

The research about "forced relocation" mainly focuses on the urban renewal period in the US and the UK and the negative social impacts caused by the forced relocation.

It is estimated that during the late 1950s and early 1960s, at least 40,000 households were displaced annually by urban renewal. The number of households displaced tapered to approximately 30,000 thereafter, through at least 1971.¹⁹ From the 1950s to 1970s, the

"*Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*," accessed on February 5, 2019, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215084.page=52>.

18 Edward G. Goetz, "Forced Relocation vs. Voluntary Mobility: The Effects of Dispersal Programmes on Households," *Housing Studies* 17, no.1 (2002): 108.

19 Herbert J. Gans, "From the Bulldozer to Homelessness," in *People, Plans, and Policies: Essays on Poverty, Racism, and Other National Urban Problems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 212-224.

mainstream research in the US and the UK believes that such forced relocation caused “destruction of communities”, because the slum clearance pushed the residents to an unfamiliar environment without friends and relations nearby.²⁰ Even worse, the residents living in slums usually had fewer and less secure housing rights compared to other applicants for public housing, thus were viewed as “undesirable” in the cities.²¹ Apart from the “destruction of communities”, Fullilove uses “root shock” to generalize the impacts of forced relocation on African American neighborhoods during urban renewal. The root shock was on two levels: “First, residents of each neighborhood experienced the traumatic stress of the loss of their life world. Second, because of the interconnections among all black people in the US, the whole of Black America experienced root shock as well. Root shock, post urban renewal, disabled powerful mechanisms of community functioning, leaving the black world at an enormous disadvantage for meeting the challenges of globalization.”²²

One of the key deficiencies of the forced relocation policy in the US during urban renewal, as discovered by Gans, is the governments’ overlook of the residents’ demands.

20 Chris Paris and Bob Blackaby, *Not Much Improvement: Urban Renewal Policy in Birmingham*. (London: Heinemann, 1979): 18. Ade Kearns and Phil Mason, “Defining and Measuring Displacement: Is Relocation from Restructured Neighborhoods Always Unwelcome and Disruptive?” *Housing Studies* 28, no.2 (2013): 178.

21 Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London: Routledge, 2001): 132.

22 Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do about It* (New York: Ballantine/One World, 2004): 20.

In the case of West End, Boston, the residents' housing demand was different from those middle-class professionals who developed the relocation procedures. The residents wanted to move in neighborhoods where they could find relatives, friends, and neighbors of their own ethnic group, whereas the policymakers considered more about safety, decency, and hygiene.²³

Despite the unsatisfactory forced relocation in the US and Europe, some recent research shows that forced relocation can be positive. In Singapore and Hong Kong, the demolition of older flats and relocation to high-rises have resulted in high rates of satisfaction, which is attributed to a number of factors such as the popularity of high-rise, improved facilities, and larger dwelling spaces. The options provided to the residents are also important, whereby residents can choose to live in the same neighborhood after redevelopment or move to another location.²⁴

To sum up, previous studies on forced relocation in the US and the UK indicate that the nature of the forced relocation is deficient as arbitrary policies may have a severe negative impact on the neighborhoods that were forced to go through urban renewal. While the examples in Singapore and Hong Kong are positive due to the policymakers' care about the residents' needs. Therefore, in the context of Chinese historic districts where the government is inevitably the leader of the regeneration, it is important to

23 Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1965): 323.

24 See studies by Yuen *et al.*, 2006; Lau, 1998; La Grange and Pretorius, 2005; Yeung, 2003.

develop a more inclusive process of relocation by taking residents' demands and concerns into consideration when stipulating and implementing the policy.

1.2.2 Voluntary Relocation and Residents' Willingness to Relocate

About voluntary relocation, or “residential mobility”, a number of studies in the US and Europe have been looking for the contributors that lead to residents' decision to move.²⁵ Such contributors can be divided into demand-side factors and supply-side factors.²⁶ On the demand side, residents' propensity to move is influenced by family size, income, age, life-cycle stage, education levels, occupation, etc. While on the supply side, residents' propensity to move is influenced by housing policy, housing market, the location and condition of new housing, and the roles of developers, real estate agents, and city planners.²⁷

Compared to other countries, China has a different political system and market system. Due to the centralized government and the combination of planned economy and market economy, the factors of residents' relocation could be different from those in other countries. In addition, historic districts are different from regular neighborhoods in China.

25 Lawrence A. Brown and Eric G. Moore. “The Intra-Urban Migration Process: A Perspective.” *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 52, no. 1 (1970): 1-13. Peter Henry Rossi, *Why Families Move: A Study in the Social Psychology of Urban Residential Mobility* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955).

26 Fulong Wu, “Intraurban Residential Relocation in Shanghai: Modes and Stratification,” *Environment and Planning A* 36, n.1 (2004): 7-25.

27 See studies by Lansing and Mueller, 1967; Simmons, 1968; Butler, et. al., 1969; Morrison, 1971; Morrison, 1972; Speare, 1974; Speare, Kobrin, and Kingkade, 1982; Forrest and Murie, 1990; Knox, 1993; Teixeira and Murdie, 1997.

Nowadays, the residents living in Chinese historic districts are mainly the elderly and migrant workers with relatively low income. Their housing demands and ability to pay for housing are lower than the average.²⁸ The relocation today has become voluntary rather than involuntary, which means residents' willingness will no longer be ignored by the government. Therefore, it is worth looking at the residents' willingness to relocate in Chinese historic districts, which is influential to the stipulation and implementation of the relocation policy.

There are only a few studies relevant to residents' willingness to relocate in Chinese historic districts recently. For example, in 2013, Liu studied the residents living in Shilong Village, Dongguan City, Guangdong Province, a National Historical and Cultural Village in China. By questionnaire research and Binary Logistic Regression, Liu's research holds that a number of contributors influence the residents' willingness to relocate. The contributors include (1) demographic attributes such as age, gender, education, and income, (2) the condition of the new housing options such as the physical characteristics, the neighborhood, and the network of the new neighbors.²⁹ In 2015, Qin, Pan, and Zhao conducted questionnaire research on residents in Nanluoguxiang, a historic district in Beijing, to analyze the residents' willingness to relocate. The results show that more than

28 Xing Zhao, "The Systemic Strategies Research on the Protecting and Organic Renewal of Historic Residential Area in Old Beijing" (Master's thesis, Tsinghua University, 2010): 53, 68 (In Chinese).

29 Jun Liu. "Research on Historic District Development Based on Willingness to Be Relocated from a Microscope Perspective." *Annual National Planning Conference*, 2013 (In Chinese).

half of the residents prefer living in the historic district to moving out. Their vision for the preservation of the historic district is to renovate the historic buildings and to improve the living conditions for their benefit.³⁰

The existing studies in China on the topic of residents' willingness to relocate in historic districts are limited in terms of revealing the relationship between the residents' willingness and the government policy. This thesis hopes to address this topic under the current policy background to provide new insight into how to improve the current relocation policy.

2. Study Area and Methodology

2.1 Study Area: Baitasi Historic District

Baitasi Historic District is one of Beijing's Historical and Cultural Preservation Zones located in the Old City of Beijing bordered by the Second Ring Road. It covers an area of approximately 37 hm² (0.143 square miles), and is surrounded by Beijing's important financial and administrative districts. The boundaries of the area are West Gongjiang Hutong and Dachaye Hutong on the north, Fuchengmen Inner Street on the south, Zhao Dengyu Road on the east, and North Fuchengmen Shuncheng Street on the west (Figure 1, 2).³¹ After the rapid urban development around Baitasi Historic District, its cultural

30 Yan Qin, Lin Pan, and Qingming Zhao, "Present Situation and Residents Intend Studies on Historical Cultural Districts: Take Dongcheng Beijing for Example," *Urban Studies* 22, no. 10 (October 2015): 11-14 (In Chinese).

31 "About Baitasi Historical Culture District," Baitasi Remade, accessed July 14, 2018,

significance was more recognized by preservationists and urban planners due to the loss of hundreds of urban heritage areas in Beijing. Thus, it is now kept as a cultural oasis in the heart of Beijing together with some other remaining *hutong* areas.



Figure 1. Location of Baitasi Historic District in the Municipality of Beijing.³²

<http://www.btsremade.com/en>.

³² Base map from <https://map.baidu.com/>, accessed on July 14, 2018, modified by author.

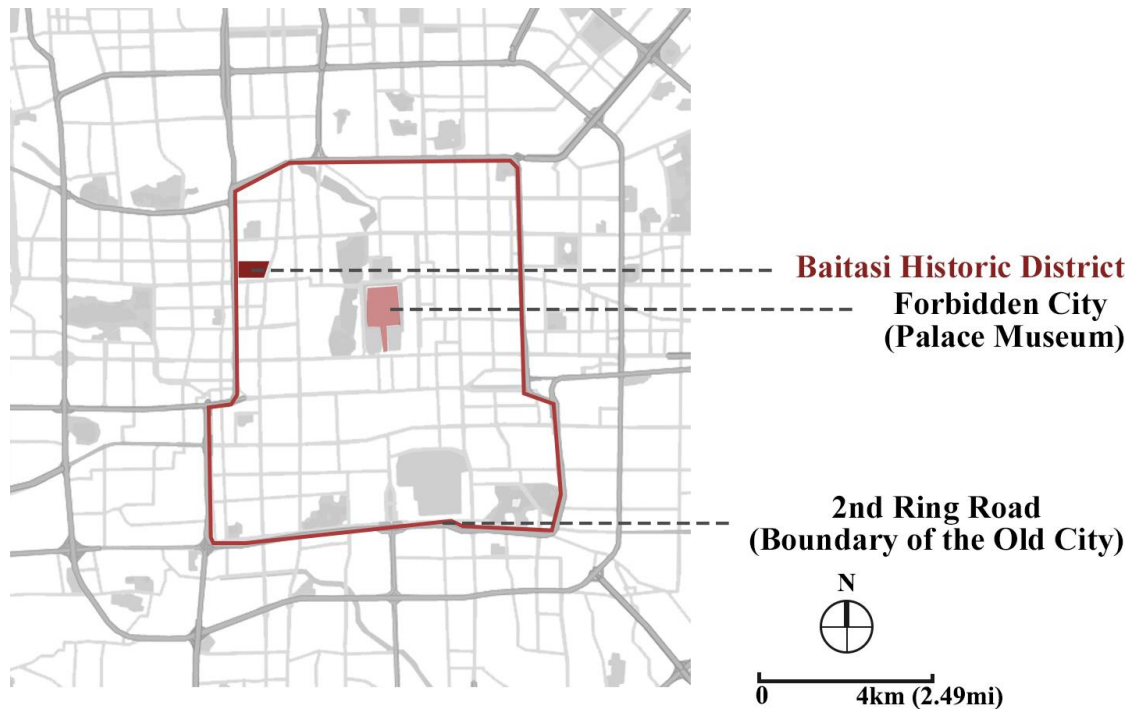


Figure 2. Location of Baitasi Historic District in the Old City of Beijing.³³

Baitasi Historic District has a long history with remarkable heritage value and cultural significance. Beijing firstly became the capital city of China in the year of 1272 A.D., Yuan Dynasty (1271A.D. – 1368A.D.). *Baitasi* (the White Pagoda Temple), constructed in 1271 to 1279, is the only heritage dated back to the Yuan Dynasty after several instances of partial destruction, reconstruction, and repair in the Ming Dynasty (1368A.D. – 1644 A.D.) and Qing Dynasty (1616A.D. – 1912A.D.). *Baitasi* has thus been designated as Cultural Relics under State-level Protection (Figure 3). Another State-level heritage site located in this area is the Former Residence and Museum of Lu Xun (1881A.D. – 1936 A.D.) who is one of the most significant writers and political and social critics in China (Figure 4).³⁴

³³ Base map from <https://map.baidu.com/>, accessed on July 14, 2018, modified by author.

³⁴ Dekui Kong, “*Connection and Co-existing: Research on the Design of Micro Alley in Baitasi Area*,

The Building of Fusuijing, constructed in 1958 during the Great Leap Forward and being a symbol of the Communism and Socialism, is on the *List of Modern and Contemporary Buildings under Protection of Beijing Municipality* (Figure 5).³⁵ In addition, there are six historic temples and seventeen historic courtyard houses (*siheyuan*) registered for protection by the Beijing Municipality.³⁶ As for intangible heritage, from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China (1912A.D. – 1949A.D.), Baitasi Temple Fair was one of the five biggest temple fairs in Beijing. In recent years, residents living in Baitasi Historic District have been holding a small-scale temple fair in this area during the Chinese New Year after the original temple fair was suspended for decades.³⁷

Beijing” (Master’s thesis, Nanjing University of the Arts, 2017): 30 (In Chinese).

35 Ruihua Li, Cong Wu, and Yifan Yang, “Conservation and Reuse of Modern Architecture Heritage: Taking Fusuijing Building as an Example,” *Research on Heritage and Preservation* 3, no.10 (2018): 90 (In Chinese).

36 Zhiguo Yao, Liming Zhao, Manyin Wang, and Zhenhua Yang, “The Comprehensive Improvement and Renewal of Baitasi Reservation District,” *Urban Studies* 19, no.9 (2012): 22 (In Chinese).

37 Dekui Kong, “*Connection and Co-existing: Research on the Design of Micro Alley in Baitasi Area, Beijing*” (Master’s thesis, Nanjing University of the Arts, 2017): 30 (In Chinese). “Baitasi Mini Temple Fair,” Baitasi Remade, accessed February 10, 2019, <http://www.btsremade.com/zh/community-neighborhood/article/875>.



Figure 3. The White Pagoda Temple (*Baitasi*).³⁸

38 Photo taken by author on January 12, 2019.



Figure 4. Museum and Former Residence of Lu Xun.³⁹

³⁹ Photo taken by author on January 12, 2019.



Figure 5. The Building of Fusuijing.⁴⁰

Baitasi Historic District is a *hutong* area in Beijing. Most of the existing buildings are one-story courtyard houses constructed in Ming and Qing Dynasty (Figure 6). A small number of buildings constructed after 1950s are multi-story residential buildings. The tallest building in the historic district is the Building of Fusuijing with eight floors. Alleys (*hutong*) between the houses are usually 5 to 8 meters (16.4-26.2 feet) wide. Only a few main alleys are 10 to 15 meters (32.8-49.2 feet) wide (Figure 7).

40 The Building of Fusuijing. Accessed on April 6, 2019. <http://image.baidu.com>.



Figure 6. Residential buildings and alleys (*hutong*) in Baitasi Historic District.⁴¹

⁴¹ Photo taken by author on January 10, 2019.



Figure 7. The heritage and fabric of Baitasi Historic District.⁴²

42 Base map from “Implantation of Cultural Catalyst,” Baitasi Remade, accessed December 30, 2018,

According to the household registration (*hukou*), approximately 6000 households are living in Baitasi Historic District. The average living area for one family is 23.37 m² (251.6 square feet). In reality, many people such as migrant workers living in the area have their households registered somewhere else, making the actual population much larger and the average living area much smaller than the aforementioned numbers. In one courtyard house which was originally designed for one family, there can be three to twenty families sharing it.⁴³ After the housing socialization in 1950s and 1960s, some privately-owned houses were transferred to publicly-owned houses which are owned by the government or the state-owned enterprises. Thus it is the government and those enterprises' responsibility to maintain those buildings. Many of those buildings were left unrepaired as they did not receive enough funding from the government and the enterprises for maintenance. Only in recent years, the government has started to rehabilitate the historic buildings in order to preserve the remaining urban heritage.⁴⁴ In general, considering the high population density, the poor building condition, and the lack of amenities such as private bathrooms, the living condition in Baitasi Historic District is still in poor quality.

<http://www.btsremade.com/zh>, modified by author.

43 "Regeneration of the Old City of Beijing: Baitasi Remade," Sohu, accessed December 30, 2018, https://www.sohu.com/a/229780213_523366.

44 Plácido González Martínez, "Authenticity as a Challenge in the Transformation of Beijing's Urban Heritage: The Commercial Gentrification of the Guozijian Historic Area." *Cities* 59, (2016): 49. Wen Duan, and Jie Zhang, "Property Ownership Issues in the Preservation and Regeneration of Historic Districts," *China Cultural Heritage Scientific Research*, no.4 (2017): 14 (In Chinese).

2.2 Current Relocation Policy in the Study Area: Baitasi Remade

From 2013 onward, a regeneration project called Baitasi Remade has been going on in Baitasi Historic District. The initiator of the project, Beijing Huarong Jinying Investment and Development Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as Huarong), is a subsidiary corporation of the Financial Street Holdings Co., Ltd., a state-owned investment company in Xicheng District, Beijing. The regeneration plan is comprised of four steps: relocation of residents, improvement of public environment, introduction of cultural catalysts, and design and creation of communities.⁴⁵

In particular, the relocation of residents is negotiation-based, which means the residents can choose to stay in the historic district or move out of the historic district. There are some rules for the relocation. First, only when the families living in one courtyard house all agree to move, the families can move. In the case of some families wanting to move whereas some wanting to stay, all the families have to stay. The reason is that the government believes it is easier to rehabilitate and reuse the houses when they are completely vacant. Second, the original plan offered three options for residents who wanted to move: new apartments in high-rises assigned by the government, government subsidy for purchasing houses selected by residents, and switch to other courtyard houses with the same value of their original houses. However, when it comes to implementation, the only option is move to apartments using the government subsidy. Every time, the government

45 “About Baitasi Remade,” Baitasi Remade, accessed December 30, 2018, <http://www.btsremade.com/zh>.

would offer one or more neighborhoods with residential apartments. Residents have to choose from those neighborhoods. The amount of subsidy is based on the market value of their courtyard houses in Baitasi Historic District. Only property owners can obtain the subsidy from the government, while the renters are not eligible. It is unclear why only one option is available in the implementation stage based on the interview. Overall, the “voluntary” relocation in Baitasi Historic District is not completely voluntary. The freedom in terms of who to move and who to stay as well as the way to receive compensation is limited.⁴⁶

At the end of 2018, 20% of the residents have been relocated. Now the relocation has been suspended due to lack of government funding and new housing sources. According to Huarong, the suspension of relocation has nothing to do with residents’ willingness or feedback.⁴⁷

2.3 Methodology

The research primarily uses qualitative methods, including literature research and semi-structured interviews. The sources of literature used to inform the study are journal articles and media coverage for demographic data of the Baitasi Historic District, and details of the current regeneration project especially the relocation process in Baitasi Historic District. Academic literature focusing on forced relocation and residential

46 “Relocation of Residents,” Baitasi Remade, accessed December 30, 2018, <http://www.btsremade.com/zh>. Also based on interview of the staff of Huarong.

47 Based on interview of the staff of Huarong.

mobility in the US and Europe, intraurban relocation in China, property ownership transformation in China, and historic district regeneration in China are reviewed.

For the purpose of understanding the implementation of the regeneration project especially the relocation, and summarizing the reasons why the residents are unwilling to relocate, interviews were conducted in January 2019. The interviewees were staff of Huarong, volunteers helping with the regeneration project and community activities in Baitasi Historic District, residents in the historic district, renters and small business owners in the historic district (Appendix 1). The focus of the interview was on staff, volunteers, and residents because of their familiarity with the relocation policy and process. Besides, according to the interview with renters and small business owners, the relocation targets property owners, thus the relocation policy does not consider renters and small businesses owners who do not own properties in the historic district. The interview questions were mainly about the content and implementation process of the relocation policy, residents' feedback on the relocation policy, and residents' reasons for staying in the historic district (Appendix 2).

3 Results

The interview shows that a considerable number of residents are unwilling to relocate, although the percentage is undetermined due to lack of census. After summarizing the interviewees' response, the research identifies five key factors that make residents unwilling to relocate: unsatisfactory government compensation; good accessibility to

various facilities and services including hospitals, schools, pharmacies, and grocery stores in and around Baitasi Historic District; complicated property ownership of the houses in Baitasi Historic District; emotional attachment to the neighborhood; and the residents' age. The first four factors are ranked according to their relative importance.

3.1 Unsatisfactory Government Compensation

The most important factor for residents unwilling to relocate is unsatisfactory government compensation. For those residents, the compensation plan has three major flaws.

First, the living expense and housing price are increasing, whereas the amount of compensation is decreasing. For one typical family with a household area of ten to twenty square meters (107.6 square feet – 215.3 square feet), the amount of compensation three years ago was approximately two two-bedroom apartments plus 800,000 yuan (117,647 USD). The compensation in late 2018 was reduced to one two-bedroom apartment plus 800,000 yuan. The cost of furnishing was not taken into consideration by the local government. In the meantime, more than half of the current residents in Baitasi Historic District are the elderly who already retired. They are not able to afford the costly relocation with their limited pension.

Second, the new housing options offered by the government is increasingly far as time goes on, which has caused a number of discontents among the current residents. Compared to residents who already moved to new houses closer to the Old City (inside the Second

Ring Road of Beijing where Baitasi Historic District is located), residents who have not relocated believe it is unfair for them to move farther away, not only because it is more time-consuming to commute to the Old City. For residents who have been living in Beijing for decades, their cognition is that only the area within the Second Ring Road is the “city”. Before Beijing’s large-scale urbanization in the 1980s, the areas outside the Second Ring Road were mostly rural areas with agricultural lands. It is thus mentally hard for the residents to accept the new housing located in the formerly underdeveloped areas.

Third, how the amount of compensation is calculated is not transparent. The residents mentioned that there was a formula to calculate the compensation, but how the formula and coefficients were determined was not explained to them.

Looking at the relocation policy, as aforementioned, one more issue regarding compensation is that the original plan offered three options for residents: new apartments in high-rises assigned by the government, government subsidy for purchasing houses selected by residents, and switch to other courtyard houses with the same value of their original houses. In reality, only the first option is available.

It is noteworthy that some residents who are currently unwilling to relocate have expressed their willingness to relocate if the government is willing to increase the compensation and offer new houses that are closer to the Old City with more facilities and services around.

3.2 Accessibility to Facilities and Services

Baitasi Historic District is surrounded by many facilities and services that are essential to its residents (Figure 8). For the elderly, there are a number of prestigious hospitals such as Peking University People's Hospital, Peking University First Hospital, and Fuwai Hospital of Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences & Peking Union Medical College (CAMS & PUMC). A number of pharmacies are within walking distance, some of which are specialized in Chinese herbs which is more trustworthy for some elderly than Western medicine. In the southern part of Baitasi Historic District, there are also a number of grocery stores, barber shops, restaurants, convenient stores, etc. that have been serving the neighborhood for more than twenty years. For parents with school children, a number of good primary, middle, and high schools are nearby, including Huangchenggen Primary School, Beijing No. 3 Middle and High School, Beijing No. 35 Middle School, and Beijing No. 159 Middle and High School. In comparison, the new housing is usually located in newly developed areas without enough facilities and services constructed yet.

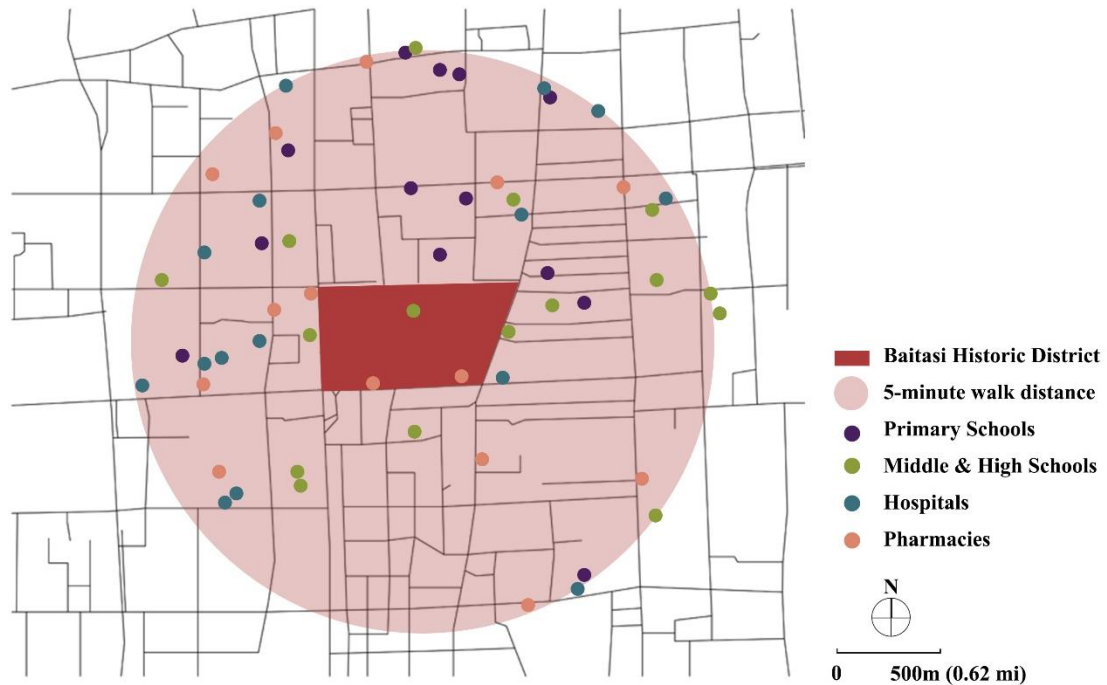


Figure 8. Facilities around Baitasi Historic District.⁴⁸

For the elderly, the new housing is more undesirable, as it takes too much time to reach a hospital in case of emergency. For young parents with school children, considering their usage of automobile, Baitasi Historic District is less unreplaceable in terms of the accessibility to schools. That is partly why more young people have chosen to move to apartment buildings.

3.3 Complicated Property Ownership

The property ownership in Baitasi Historic District, as well as a large number of historic districts in many Chinese cities, is complicated with a historical reason.

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the houses in

⁴⁸ Image produced by author based on data from Baidu Maps, accessed on February 20, 2019, <https://map.baidu.com/>.

historic districts were mainly privately-constructed and owned. In the 1950s and 1960s, after the housing socialization, some houses were nationalized. The national government then distributed part of the government-owned houses to some state-owned enterprises, the employees of which could rent or purchase those houses with a price lower than the market value. Nowadays, there are basically three types of property in historic districts: privately-owned houses, government-owned houses, and houses owned by state-owned enterprises. The latter two types of houses are known as publicly-owned. It is the government and those enterprises' responsibility to maintain those houses.⁴⁹ In Baitasi Historic District, in particular, there is a special type of government-owned houses. They were constructed by the national government during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) for middle-class workers of state-owned enterprises. Those houses were supposed to be temporal and were constructed in poor quality from the beginning.⁵⁰

The property ownership causes many problems for the relocation in two different ways:

The first problem is that the compensation is different based on ownership. Homeowners of the privately-owned houses can have more compensation from the government. While residents of the publicly-owned houses have less compensation

49 Junhua Lv, "Beijing's Old and Dilapidated Housing Renewal," *Cities* 14, no.2 (1997): 62. Wen Duan, and Jie Zhang, "Property Ownership Issues in the Preservation and Regeneration of Historic Districts," *China Cultural Heritage Scientific Research*, no.4 (2017): 14 (In Chinese). Plácido González Martínez, "Authenticity as a Challenge in the Transformation of Beijing's Urban Heritage: The Commercial Gentrification of the Guozijian Historic Area." *Cities* 59, (2016): 49.

50 Based on interview of the residents in Baitasi Historic Districts. Some of them are living in the state-owned houses or houses owned by state-owned enterprises now.

because the government believes that they have already used the houses at a lower price. Residents of those houses are more dissatisfied with the difference because they believe that the government and the state-owned enterprises have failed to maintain their houses in the past decades.

In the second situation, the problem is within the families. Most of the families living in Baitasi Historic District have more than one adult child. In some cases, although the legal homeowner is the parents, all the children and the parents want to have their own apartments. That means, the government has to provide more than two apartments to each of those families, which is unaffordable for the government. In other cases, the original owners passed away long ago. The houses have been divided up by the children of the original owners as a legacy. When there is monetary compensation from the government, all the children want to re-divide the houses and are not able to reach a consensus. Thus they are unwilling to relocate and decide to wait to see if there will be any changes to the relocation policy that they might benefit from. There are also a few publicly-owned houses that were sold by the original owners. However, based on the government regulation, the owners do not have the right to sell those houses. Thus it is difficult to determine who can obtain the compensation as the transaction may not be approved by the government. Seemingly, the individual cases are not representative enough. In fact, the aforementioned cases are common phenomena in China, especially the case of having disagreement on parents' legacy between siblings in rural areas and old cities for people who were born

before the 1980s when the One Child Policy had not yet been implemented.

To some extent, the unwillingness caused by property ownership still ties back to residents' dissatisfaction to the government compensation.

3.4 Emotional Attachment to the Neighborhood

During the interview, all the elderly expressed strong emotional attachment to the physical space and their neighbors which make them refuse to leave the neighborhood and change their way of living.

Some of the elderly vividly described their childhood experience and the events they have been enjoying with their neighbors. For example, the sound made by the bells on the White Pagoda and walking to school in five minutes every day are their significant and special memories to the place. The elderly also gather around the open spaces and the streets to dance, play Chinese chess and chat, and greet each other when they do grocery shopping every day (Figure 9). In comparison, it is difficult for the elderly to make new friends when they move to apartment buildings in modern neighborhoods. In China, it is common that people living in one modern apartment building do not know or talk to each other.



Figure 9. A group of residents playing Chinese chess on the street corner.⁵¹

3.5 Residents' Age

The research finds that residents who are unwilling to relocate are usually the elderly. According to the interviewees, the older generation values the social bonds and memories more than the living condition. Hence they tend to choose to stay despite the poor housing quality. Whereas the younger generation values better living condition, modern facilities, and private space more than the emotional attachment. Even before the government started the relocation policy, a large number of young people who can afford new houses in modern

⁵¹ Photo taken by author on January 13, 2019.

apartment buildings already moved out. Therefore, age is an important factor when investigating who is unwilling to relocate.

In Baitasi Historic District, the “young flight” has significantly changed the demographic composition: more than half are elderly, and one third are migrant workers who rent the houses that the young residents left behind.

3.6 Summary: Relationships of the Factors

Overall, the five key factors have different features and are sometimes correlated (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of the factors of residents’ willingness to relocate

	Internal	In between	External
Macro-level			Compensation
In between		Property ownership	
Micro-level	Emotional Attachment & Age		Accessibility to facilities and services

Compensation comes directly from the government policy at the beginning of the entire relocation process, thus can be viewed as on macro-level. Accessibility to facilities and services, emotional attachment to the neighborhood, and age are more related to the demands and attributes of the residents and Baitasi Historic District, thus can be viewed as on micro-level. The complicated property ownership is rooted in previous government policy. The problems related to the property ownership is sometimes amplified by

individual families, thus this factor can be viewed as between macro- and micro-level.

Meanwhile, emotional attachment to the neighborhood and age are intrinsic to the residents, thus can be viewed as internal factors. Compensation and accessibility to facilities and services are determined or influenced by the political and built environment, thus can be viewed as external factors. Property ownership can be either internal or external, depending on what the conflicts the ownership brings to the residents. If it is the disagreement within the individual families, property ownership is an internal factor. If it is the disagreement between the residents and the government, property ownership is an external factor.

As mentioned above, property ownership is to some extent related to compensation, as the unsolved property ownership intensifies the residents' discontent with the compensation. Age is influential to emotional attachment to the neighborhood and accessibility to facilities and services. Because the elderly usually have a stronger emotional attachment, and their age determines that they need better access to hospitals and pharmacies.

The reason for the above analysis and summary is to better understand the features and interrelationships of the factors in order to seek solutions to the issues of the relocation policy, which will be presented afterward.

4. Discussion: Conditional Stayers vs. Determined Stayers

A phenomenon observed through the interview is that there are two types of residents that are unwilling to relocate. Some residents' unwillingness to relocate is actually out of their discontent with the government policy. Since their willingness to relocate is under certain conditions, this research addresses them as "conditional stayers". Conditional stayers are unwilling to relocate for now. They are deep down willing to relocate, but only in the case of the government improving the relocation policy to meet their demands. The other type of stayers is those who are determined to stay in Baitasi Historic District despite the government policy. Thus they are addressed as "determined stayers". For the conditional stayers and determined stayers, the five factors summarized above are not equally influential to their willingness to relocate.

The difference between conditional stayers and determined stayers is more than their willingness to relocate and how the five factors affect them. They have different demands for the relocation which are focused on different stages of the relocation process. Conditional stayers' demands are more focused on the early stage of the relocation, meaning what the relocation rules are and how the negotiation between the government and residents will go. While determined stayers are more concerned about the later stage of the relocation, meaning how the government will rehabilitate and reuse the buildings after the relocation is finished. Given their different demands and concerns, it is necessary to distinguish the two types of stayers in order to locate the particular issues of the

relocation policy.

4.1 Factors of Willingness to Relocate for Conditional Stayers and Determined Stayers

The conditional stayers in Baitasi Historic District have the following characteristics: (1) they do not have such a strong attachment to the neighborhood as determined stayers do; (2) they are slightly younger than determined stayers and are in relatively good health without a heavy demand on the prestigious hospitals around the neighborhood; (3) they are dissatisfied with the dilapidated houses in the neighborhood and expect better housing quality. The top reason why they are currently unwilling to relocate is the unsatisfactory government policy. Opposite to the conditional stayers, the determined stayers in Baitasi Historic District are mostly more than sixty years old. They rely more on medical treatments and are already used to going to the hospitals around the neighborhood. As for the living condition, they do not mind the housing quality and hope to meet and chat with their acquaintances every day. Relocation, however, is time-consuming and expensive. All in all, their strong attachment to the physical environment in and around the neighborhood as well as their attachment to their neighbors indicate their strong sense of place. For the conditional stayers and determined stayers, property ownership is a shared concern. Nonetheless, the determined stayers' attachment to the neighborhood and demands on the hospitals and pharmacies triumph the conflicts brought by property ownership. Whereas property ownership exacerbates the conditional stayers' discontent with the government

policy.

In summary, the five factors of willingness to relocate are not equally important for the conditional stayers and determined stayers (Table 2). For the conditional stayers, the unsatisfactory government compensation, property ownership, and age are strongly influential factors. While accessibility to facilities and services and emotional attachment are weakly influential factors. For the determined stayers, accessibility to facilities and services, emotional attachment, and age are the strongly influential factors. While unsatisfactory government compensation and property ownership are the weakly influential factors.

Table 2. Factors of conditional stayers and determined stayers' willingness to relocate.

	Conditional Stayers	Determined Stayers
Compensation	●	○
Accessibility to Facilities and Services	○	●
Property Ownership	●	○
Emotional Attachment	○	●
Age	●	●

(●: Strongly influential; ○: Weakly influential)

4.2 Conditional Stayers and Determined Stayers' Different Demands for the Relocation

4.2.1 Conditional Stayers and the Early Stage of the Relocation

The conditional stayers have two anticipations before the spatial relocation starts. The first anticipation is more freedom to decide how they can move. In the present policy framework, they hope the government can increase the amount of monetary compensation and assign neighborhoods that are closer to the Old City with more amenities around, so that they can purchase more spacious houses and spend less time on commuting. The second anticipation is more transparency for the information release and negotiation between them and the government. Based on their response, in the early stage of the relocation, the relocation policy has three major issues:

(1) Insufficient compensation: the compensation is not enough to cover their relocation cost, and the calculation of the subsidy is not explained to them.

(2) Lack of freedom: the new neighborhoods are assigned by the government rather than chosen by themselves. Moreover, it is unreasonable that the relocation can only happen when the families sharing one courtyard house all agree to relocate.

(3) Lack of transparency: the government does not release information in time with multiple channels to ensure they are well-informed. Some of the interviewees are still not sure where to get information and what the detailed relocation plan is.

Under the premise that relocation in *hutong* areas is necessary for the residents' well-

being due to the high population density and poor quality of housing, the conditional stayers are candidates for relocation. Therefore, their demands on the relocation policy are crucial for the government to take into consideration. The above issues of the present relocation policy listed by them are where the government can start to reconsider the policy.

4.2.2 Determined Stayers and the Later Stage of the Relocation

Once some of the residents move out, the government will rehabilitate the vacant houses as well as the determined stayers' houses. Thus the anticipation of the determined stayers is improved housing quality of their dwellings and easy-going new neighbors if possible. From the determined stayers' response, the government policy in the later stage of the relocation has the following issues:

(1) More face-saving projects than actual rehabilitation: nowadays, 20% of residents have been relocated, and the relocation has been suspended. The following improvement of the built environment in Baitasi Historic District does not include a sufficient number of stayers' dwellings. Rather, the efforts and funds have been put on repainting the exterior walls of the houses along the main alleys and adding alley decorations for the purpose of exterior beautification (Figure 10). The government's priority is not helping the stayers with their urgent needs.



Figure 10. Alley beautification in Baitasi Historic District.⁵²

(2) Contraversial adaptive reuse of historic houses: a small number of courtyard houses have been rehabilitated by some architecture firms dicrectly or indirectly hired by the local government as a trial for courtyard house rehabilitation, such as the Co-living Courtyard designed by Standard Architecture (Figure 11), Courtyard Hybrid by Vector Architects (Figure 12), and Split Courtyard House by Trace Architecture Office (Figure 13). From the design standpoint, the rehabilitation projects fits into the historical environment by using traditional and modern materials in an innovative way and provides

⁵² Photo taken by author on January 12, 2019.

essential facilities including private bathroom and storage space that are a shortage in the historic district.⁵³ However, considering thousands of historic houses in Baitasi Historic District waiting for rehabilitation, those adaptive reuse approaches are costly to be applied in such a large scale in terms of time and expenditure. It is also difficult for the elderly to accept some creative design in their courtyard houses.



Figure 11. Co-living Courtyard in Baitasi Historic District.⁵⁴

53 Dekui Kong, “*Connection and Co-existing: Research on the Design of Micro Alley in Baitasi Area, Beijing*” (Master’s thesis, Nanjing University of the Arts, 2017): 37- (In Chinese).

54 Standard Architecture, *Co-living Courtyard*. March 6, 2018, Beijing. Accessed February 21, 2019, <http://www.standardarchitecture.cn/v2news/7887>.



Figure 12. Courtyard Hybrid in Baitasi Historic District.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Vector Architecture, *Courtyard Hybrid*. Accessed May 2, 2019, <http://www.vectorarchitects.com/projects/40>.



Figure 13. Split Courtyard House in Baitasi Historic District.⁵⁶

(3) Potential gentrification: in the post-relocation stage, the government hopes to bring in artists and new residents with higher consuming power to make the place more economically self-sustainable. Whether the approaches will displace the lower-income

⁵⁶ Trace Architecture Office, *Split Courtyard House*. Accessed May 2, 2019, <http://www.t-a-o.cn/split-courtyard-house/>.

residents including the determined stayers and cause gentrification is undetermined.

Considering the determined stayers' sense of place, they are promising participants of the historic district regeneration. Nevertheless, when asked about historic preservation, most of the respondents showed little interest in participating in the regeneration project and little knowledge of the cultural significance of the heritage sites and the historic houses in their neighborhood. Between preserving Baitasi Historic District for the public good and improving their own living condition, they choose the latter over the former. Seemingly, their response implies the constant conflict of public good versus private good in the field of historic preservation. In the case of Baitasi Historic District and many other Chinese historic districts, however, the public good and private good are not necessarily in conflict, as the residents' demands in rehabilitating and reusing their private space and the public space are reasonable and part of what preservation should accomplish. In the later stage of the relocation, the goal of historic preservation and the determined stayers' demands altogether require the government to think twice before deciding how to improve the built environment of Baitasi Historic District.

5. Policy Recommendations

The five influential factors of residents' willingness to relocate in Baitasi Historic District reflect the residents' demands of improving their living condition and the challenges that the relocation process faces. The two types of stayers' different responses to the five factors reveal that various stages of the relocation policy need to be reconsidered.

Combining the Chinese context and other countries' experiences in historic preservation and urban regeneration, the research will present four policy recommendations: (1) enhance community engagement, (2) broaden financing channels, (3) provide more relocation options, and (4) explore applicable rehabilitation plan. The first recommendation is through the whole process of relocation. The second and third recommendations are more focused on the policy implementation stage. The fourth recommendation is for the later stage of the relocation when some residents have moved out.

5.1 Enhance community engagement

Community engagement has always been a weak point in China. It is important to develop a bottom-up system where community members can be involved. For the relocation in historic districts, in particular, the local government should collect and value the residents' opinions and concerns from the very beginning to the end, and adjust the policy based on the residents' feedback in time. Many residents in historic districts are the elderly and lower-income groups with relatively low education level and less access to the internet. Therefore, the language should be clear and simple enough for them to fully understand. The information should be disseminated in ways that they can have access to. For example, one of the things that the residents care the most is how the compensation is calculated. The information should be hence transparent to them.

The neighborhoods in China usually have community committees which are government-led and in charge of several neighborhoods but do not have community

development corporations or other voluntary organizations that cater to residents' needs. Thus the government can encourage the residents to form their own organizations to help smooth the communication between the government and the residents. In fact, many neighborhoods including Baitasi Historic District have a wide range of informal groups such as dancing clubs, Chinese chess clubs, and walking clubs which are the most significant places where residents can share information and opinions. Those informal groups can be the start of the voluntary community organizations.

5.2 Broaden financing channels

In China, the funding for historic preservation is generally from five sources: (1) special fund for historic preservation from the national government, (2) budget of the provincial and municipal government, (3) budget of different departments of the local government, such as the budget of the Power Supply Bureau which is exclusively for the power supply upgrading, (4) budget of the state-owned enterprises which is exclusively for maintaining the properties owned by those enterprises, and (5) residents' own money to maintain their own houses. For special preservation or regeneration projects, e.g. relocation in historic districts, bank loan, grants of international organizations, investment of real estate developers, and income from bidding and auction might be applied. It appears that there are diverse funding sources for the preservation projects. As a matter of fact, the projects heavily rely on the budget of the provincial and local government. Only well-recognized heritage sites can acquire a sufficient amount of national government funding.

Only a small number of cities can acquire international grants. In the meantime, the relocation is one of the most costly processes. In Beijing, the estimated cost of relocation is approximately 1.5 billion yuan/10,000 residents (0.22 billion US dollars/10,000 residents) in the year of 2013. As a result, the preservation projects, especially those involved with relocation, are a huge burden to the local government.⁵⁷

For relocation projects, in particular, adequate funding is the foundation to initiate the projects and to meet the residents' demands on housing. The local government should consider broadening the financing channels as a way to solve the funding problem and many other problems related to a lack of funding. First, the government can consider turning to real estate investment. The companies that are in charge of the projects do not have to be state-owned. Second, the government can consider providing grant, tax credit, and tax abatement for the lower-income residents to repair the privately-owned houses on their own. The potential issues of the approaches are over-commercialization and destruction of the original fabric of the historic districts, as the real estate developers and the residents are lack of professional knowledge and skills of historic preservation. Thus design guidelines and other regulations need to be developed. The projects can be advised and overseen by professional supervisors as well. In fact, there are some trials to have residents repair their own houses using government subsidy and regulated by design

57 Xiaofeng Gui, and Yue Ge, "Fund for Conservation of Historic District," *Urban Planning Review* 29, no.7 (July 2005): 79-82 (In Chinese).

guidelines, such as in Nanluoguxiang, Beijing, and the Ancient City of Pingyao, Shanxi Province.⁵⁸

5.3 Provide more relocation options

As aforementioned, the relocation project in Baitasi Historic District and some other neighborhoods in Beijing originally offered three options which actually can meet more residents' demands. It is hence necessary to consider putting the options into practice. At the same time, there are other problems related to how to relocate the residents, which requires more potential options for the residents to choose.

First, the government does not have to assign new neighborhoods for the residents. When most of the new houses assigned by the government cannot meet the residents' needs for facilities, some residents are reluctant to move. Thus the government can open the housing choice. Residents can purchase new houses with their preferences using the government compensation.

Second, it is unnecessary to relocate the families sharing one courtyard house altogether. If some want to relocate while others want to stay, those that want to relocate can move to new houses. While those that want to stay can move to other courtyard houses temporarily during the rehabilitation. After the vacant courtyard house is finished rehabilitating, the families that have moved temporarily can move back to their original

58 Mingyu Chen, Yang Shi, and Lanchun Bian, "Research on the Prioritization of Funding in Beijing's Historic District Regeneration," *Beijing Planning Review*, no.2 (2018): 66 (In Chinese).

houses. One of the three options offered to the residents in Baitasi Historic District is that they can switch to courtyard houses that have the same market value with their original houses. This option can be combined with the temporary moving and rehabilitation. In other words, during the rehabilitation, for the convenience of the rehabilitation project, the families that are willing to stay can switch to other courtyard houses. If they prefer the new courtyard houses to their original ones and the new ones are already rehabilitated, they can choose not to move back.

Third, the government can consider allowing the residents who have moved out of the historic districts to move back to courtyard houses after the rehabilitation is completed. During the rehabilitation, the residents can rent houses in new neighborhoods. After the project is completed, they can move back as they wish. In this case, the compensation can be a subsidy to partly cover their rent, which can be lower than the subsidy to purchase new houses. In this way, the government can save some money. And the residents can finally enjoy improved living condition in their old neighborhood that they are attached to.

5.4 Explore applicable rehabilitation plan

When some residents have moved out, how to rehabilitate and reuse the vacant buildings comes to the forefront. There are three suggestions for the government to consider.

First, the government should prioritize the repair of dilapidated houses instead of the exterior beautification. As some scholars have analyzed, in comparison to beautifying the

building facades and the streets, and upgrading the businesses in historic districts, it is more urgent and more worthwhile to improve the living condition and to preserve the heritage. Moreover, it is more beneficial to the community and thus easier to involve the community to improve their living condition and preserve the heritage first (Figure 14).⁵⁹

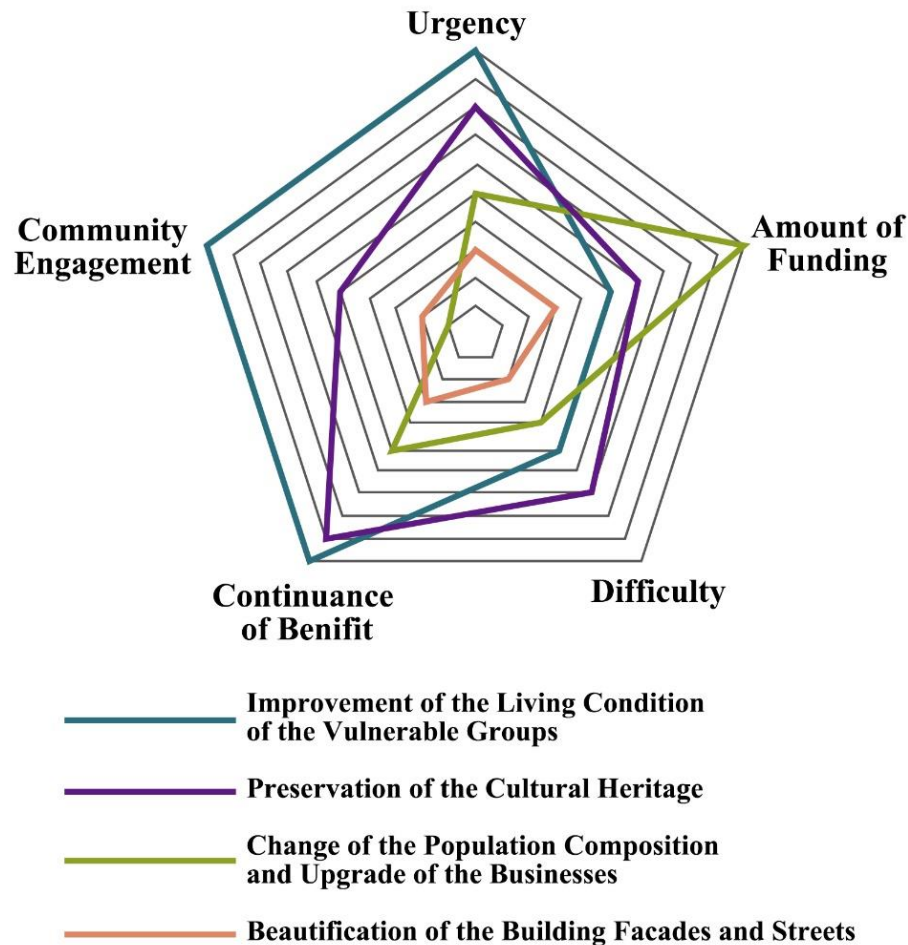


Figure 14. Analysis of four ways of using preservation funding.⁶⁰

Second, the trias such as the Co-living Courtyard, Courtyard Hybrid, and Split

⁵⁹ Mingyu Chen, Yang Shi, and Lanchun Bian, “Research on the Prioritization of Funding in Beijing’s Historic District Regeneration,” *Beijing Planning Review*, no.2 (2018): 68. (In Chinese)

⁶⁰ Ibid. Caption translated by author.

Courtyard House can be continued. In addition to the design innovation and the enhanced architectural and aesthetic value out of the projects, the trials can help find out more economical ways that can be largely applied to thousands of historic buildings in the historic districts. Some residents may not be able to accept the new design. It is therefore important for the designers to communicate with the residents in order to meet their expectation.

Third, to support the new design trial and the rehabilitation plan, building survey can be conducted. The survey can include building type, building condition analysis, major issues of the buildings, etc. The information of building type is particularly important in the case of Chinese historic districts, as the number of the buildings waiting to be repaired means that the rehabilitation plan should be efficient and economical. Thus the rehabilitation plan can be developed for different building types.

6. Conclusion

In the new era of preserving historic districts by retaining its original physical form as well as residential function instead of turning it into commercial districts or tourist attractions entirely, the Chinese government has been exploring a mild and incremental approach, including changing the involuntary and complete relocation to negotiable and partial relocation. During this process, residents' willingness to relocate is important for the government to consider who is likely to move and who is likely to stay. Using Baitasi Historic District in the Old City of Beijing as an example with the methods of literature

research and semi-structured interviews, this research concludes with five factors that cause some residents unwilling to relocate: unsatisfactory government compensation; good accessibility to various facilities and services including hospitals, schools, pharmacies, and grocery stores in and around the neighborhood; complicated property ownership of the houses in the neighborhood; emotional attachment to the neighborhood; and the residents' age. Moreover, the research distinguishes two types of residents that are unwilling to relocate and addresses them as conditional stayers and determined stayers. Their different demands to the relocation and anticipation of the historic district regeneration reflect various problems within the relocation policy. Consequently, the research offers four recommendations to help improve the relocation in Chinese historic districts: enhance community engagement, broaden financing channels, provide more relocation options, and explore applicable rehabilitation plan.

Due to the time constraint of this research, the interviewees are mostly the elderly living in Baitasi Historic District who have retired and have more free time to participate in the interview. Thus the number, as well as the composition of the interviewees, could be more representative in future studies in order to draw a more general conclusion.

Furthermore, this research hopes to offer four aspects for future scholars to explore the field of voluntary relocation in historic districts in China as well as other countries. First, how the residents' demographic attributes may influence their willingness to relocate can be studied. This research only finds out one demographic attribute which is age that is

influential to residents' willingness to relocate. To investigate other attributes such as education level, occupation, family size, etc., as analyzed by previous scholars when looking at residential mobility, a large amount of data needs to be collected and quantitative methods such as regression analysis may be applied. Second, property ownership is a complicated problem faced by historic districts as well as regular neighborhoods in China specifically. The history of the ownership transferal has been studied so far. As a next step, more attention can be paid to what other conflicts are resulted from the property ownership aside from those discovered by this research and how to solve the issues. Third, since compensation is the biggest concern of the local government as well as the residents, how the compensation should be calculated, how much is appropriate for the residents, and whether it is reasonable to consider property ownership as one of the factors to decide compensation should be examined. Fourth, the current relocation policy including the compensation only considers property owners even if the relocation will simultaneously affect renters and small business owners who rent the houses and stores. Therefore, it is worth considering whether the renters and small business owners should be involved in the relocation process.

As the historic district regeneration in China has just started to gear to a new direction, there are many opportunities for the government and professionals to attempt to achieve the goal of developing the cities and economy while preserving the heritage. One of the most important ways is to gradually change the top-down preservation system to a more

bottom-up system where residents, renters, small business owners, and real estate developers can work together to recreate the communities. Relocation in Chinese historic districts can be the start of the change. In Chinese historic districts, relocation is inevitably the first step of regeneration. Understanding residents' willingness to relocate should then be the first step of relocation, as it provides abundant information for the government to set up goals, draw up plans, and implement the plans. Although relocation is the biggest obstacle for the local government to initiate the regeneration project due to the huge amount of funds and large population involved, it can also be the best chance to reach out to the community from the very beginning. With the younger generations' increasing care about traditional culture and historic preservation in China, the bottom-up efforts will ultimately contribute to the preservation and inheritance of heritage dramatically. During the process, the government's role should be the moderator rather than the modeler.

Appendix 1. List of Interviewees

Table A1-1. List of Interviewees.

No.	Time of Interview	Identity	Age*	Gender
1-1	01/10/2019	Employee of Huarong	35	Male
2-1	01/10/2019	Volunteer of the historic district	40	Male
2-2	01/10/2019	Volunteer of the historic district	25	Female
3-1	01/10/2019	Resident	~60	Female
3-2	01/10/2019	Resident	~80	Male
3-3	01/11/2019	Resident	~70	Female
3-4	01/11/2019	Resident	63	Male
3-5	01/11/2019	Resident	52	Male
3-6	01/11/2019	Resident	50	Male
3-7	01/11/2019	Resident (the Building of Fusuijing)	85	Female
3-8	01/12/2019	Resident	~70	Male
3-9	01/12/2019	Resident	~70	Female
3-10	01/12/2019	Resident	~65	Female
3-11	01/12/2019	Resident	~65	Male
3-12	01/12/2019	Resident (lives in another historic district,	~75	Female

his son lives in Baitasi Historic District)				
3-13	01/12/2019	Resident	~60	Male
3-14	01/12/2019	Resident	~55	Male
4-1	01/10/2019	Renter	~40	Male
4-2	01/12/2019	Renter	~65	Female
5-1	01/10/2019	Small business owner (convenient store)	35	Male
5-2	01/11/2019	Small business owner (home decoration)	~35	Female
5-3	01/12/2019	Small business owner (grocery store)	~40	Female

*Some interviewees were not comfortable talking about age, so they gave an approximate age which is marked by “~” in front of the age number.

Appendix 2. Framework of Interview

The following questions are the basic questions for different interviewees. While other questions might be raised based on their response during the interview.

1. Interview Questions for the Residents

(1) About the relocation policy:

- What do you know about the relocation policy?
- Did you hear about the policy from the government or from your family/neighbors?
- Do you support the policy or not?
- What are the pros and cons of the policy?
- How much freedom do you have in terms of choosing to move versus stay and where to move?

(2) About their willingness to relocate:

- Are you willing to relocate or to stay in the neighborhood? If you are willing to stay, why?
- What do you know about your children/parents/neighbors? Are they willing to stay in the neighborhood? Why or why not?

(3) About the cultural significance and preservation of the historic district:

- How much do you know about the heritage value and cultural significance of the

neighborhood?

- Are you proud of living in a historic district?
- What are the special and valuable memories you have had about the neighborhood?
- What do you think of the preservation efforts in the historic district so far?

(4) About the living condition:

- How many families are there in your courtyard house?
- What is the building condition of your house?

(5) Personal information:

- How long have you been living in the neighborhood?
- How many people do you have in your family? Do they all live in the neighborhood?
- What are your job and your family members' jobs?
- How old are you and your family members that live in the neighborhood now?

2. Interview Questions for the Renters and Small Business Owners

- How long have you been in the neighborhood?
- Do you get along well with the residents in the neighborhood?
- How much do you know about the relocation policy?
- How does the relocation policy affect you and/or your store?
- What do you know about the residents' attitudes toward the relocation policy?
- What is your plan if you have to move out of the neighborhood due to the government

policy?

3. Interview Questions for the Staff of Huarong

(1) About the neighborhood:

- What are the population composition and the total population of the neighborhood?
- Specifically, how many elderly and migrant workers live in the neighborhood now?

(2) About the relocation:

- What are the options for the residents to relocate? Which one do they usually choose?
- How many people do you plan to relocate? Have you achieved the goal?
- Why do you require all the families sharing one courtyard house to relocate together?
- What is the major funding source of the relocation?

(3) About the residents' attitudes:

- How many people are willing to relocate and how many are unwilling to relocate?
- For those who are unwilling to relocate, what are their main reasons?
- How do you communicate with the residents?

4. Interview Questions for the Volunteers Working in the Neighborhood

(1) About the neighborhood:

- What are the population composition and the total population of the neighborhood?
- Specifically, how many elderly and migrant workers live in the neighborhood now?

(2) About the relocation:

- What are the options for the residents to relocate? Which one do they usually choose?

(3) About the residents' attitudes:

- How many people are willing to relocate and how many are unwilling to relocate?
- For those who are unwilling to relocate, what are their main reasons?

(4) About their voluntary work:

- What is the relationship between the volunteers and the government/Huarong company?
- What events do you usually have for the neighborhood?
- How many people usually participate in the events? Are they residents of Baitasi Historic District?

Appendix 3. Statistical Results

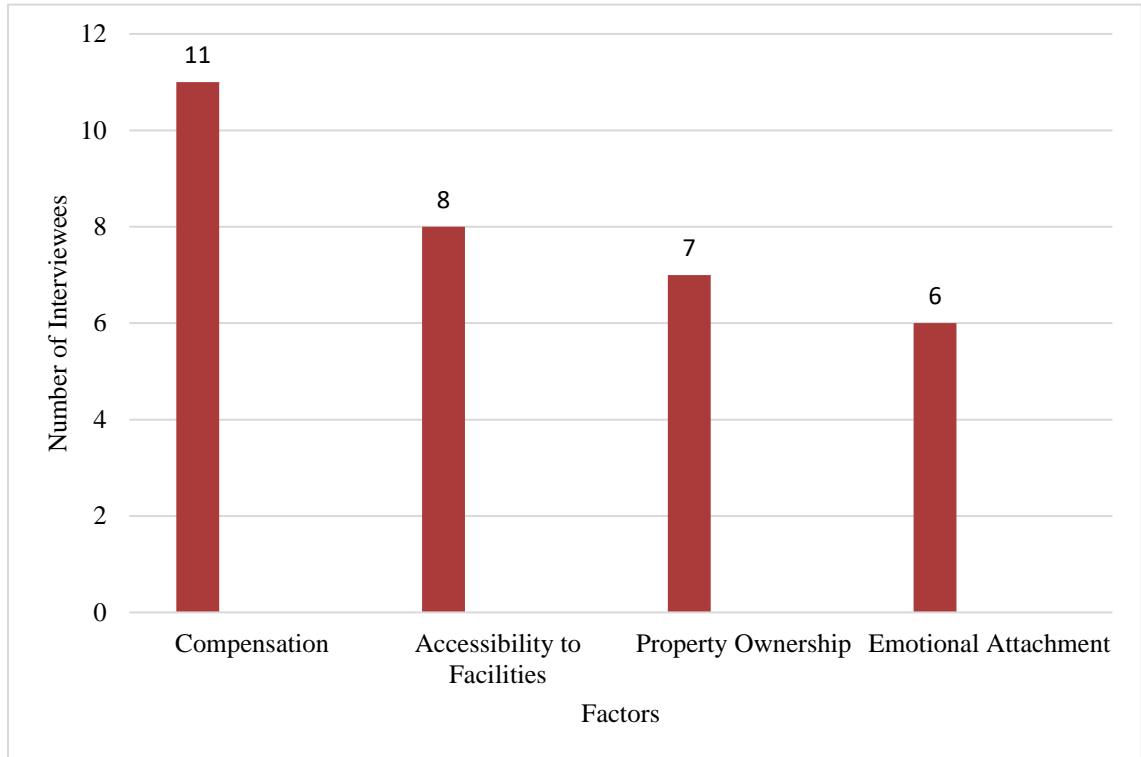


Figure A3-1. The Number of interviewees and the factors of their willingness to relocate.

The diagram shows that in the interview, eleven interviewees mentioned unsatisfactory government compensation as one of the factors that make them unwilling to relocate. Likewise, eight interviewees mentioned accessibilities to facilities and services in and around the neighborhood, seven interviewees mentioned the complicated property ownership in the neighborhood, and six interviewees mentioned emotional attachment to the neighborhood.

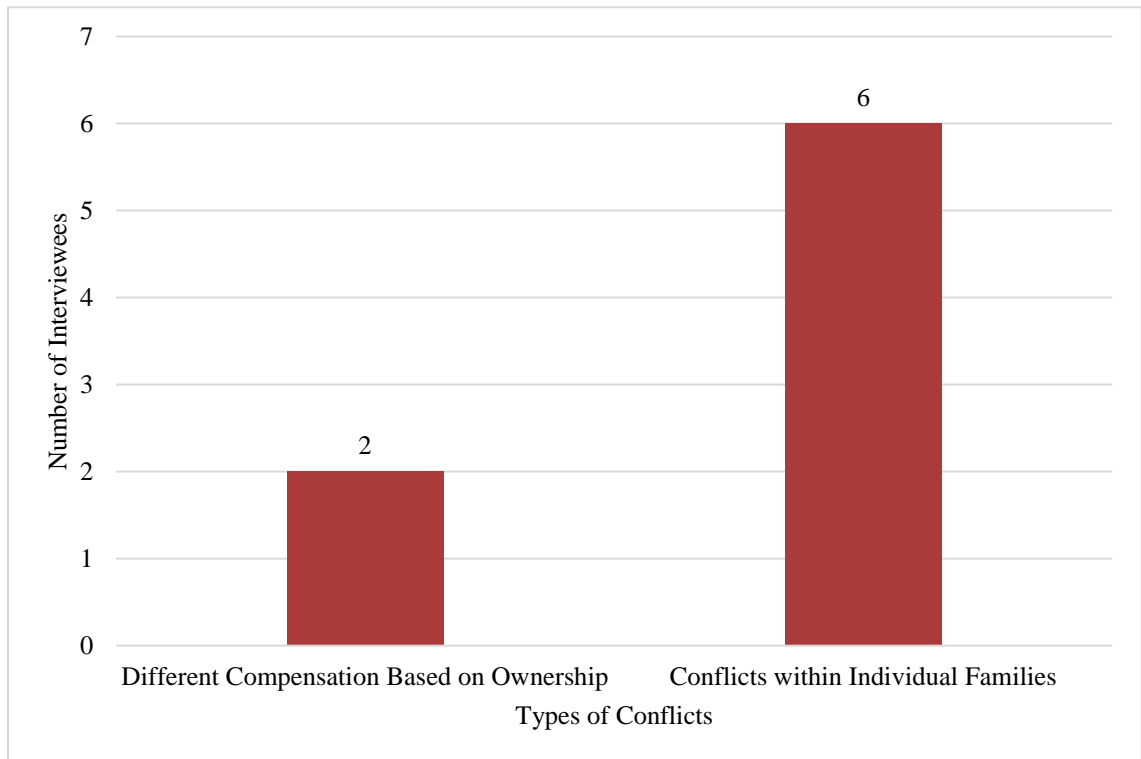


Figure A3-2. The Number of interviewees and the two types of conflicts triggered by property ownership.

The diagram shows that among the eight interviewees who mentioned complicated property ownership as one of the factors that make them unwilling to relocate, two of them talked about the different compensation based on the ownership, which was believed to be unfair. Six of them talked about the conflicts within their families and their friends/neighbors' families.

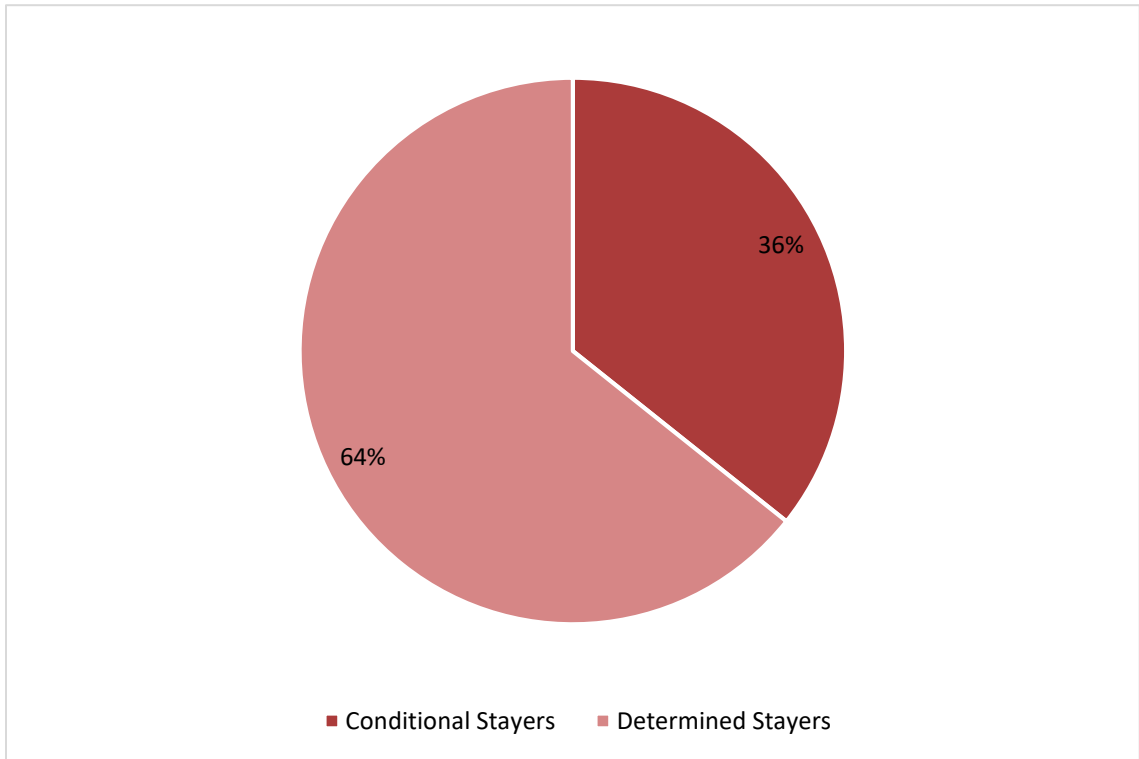


Figure A3-3. Percentage of conditional stayers and determined stayers
among the interviewees

The diagram shows that among the fourteen residents that were interviewed, approximately one third of them are conditional stayers, and two thirds of them are determined stayers.

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